

113. But the position was reduced?—It was not reduced.

114. Do you not reduce it in this sense, that the man who is now there——?—The position is that we never raised the grade of the station. We left the man there until such time as we could find a suitable place for him. That is another case in which the Department's generosity gets it into trouble.

115. Do you consider that the Locomotive Foreman at Auckland is properly remunerated at £225, seeing that his predecessor received £300, and the clerk receives the same salary as himself?—I question whether his clerk does receive the same salary.

116. You could look it up?—I do not happen to know who he is, but at any rate in regard to this question of remuneration, as I have already said, the man is fairly remunerated and he will work through. He knows that.

117. Only the grade he is in at present?—And he will get promotion in due course. You are getting into this position, and I want to make it quite clear—you are going to force the Department to make a hard-and-fast rule in every case, which is going to mean that in the end the positions will not be increased. There are men that we now put up in D.-3 until such time as we can place them, and men that we leave and sometimes pay in their positions more than they should be paid. It will not be possible to do that kind of thing if we are going to be forced into the position that when a vacancy occurs we cannot take a suitable man who is on the spot, but have to take somebody else who could be provided for elsewhere, and we will just put the first man into the position, and then the last end will be worse than at present. I am speaking with an intimate knowledge of what goes on, and I can say without fear of contradiction that what the Department does is in the interests of the staff.* We never try to pull down at all. The tendency is to put up all the time. We put up so many men that all avenues for promotion became blocked, and we got into the position of having men throughout the service that we could not suitably place for many months. That had to stop. The General Manager knows that. Each year the maximum number of men was put up and their appointments approved, and finally we reached the limit. One man was fourteen months before we could place him.

118. So far as the Locomotive Foreman at Auckland is concerned, I understand from you that he is next in order for promotion?—I have not said that. I have said he will work up in due course. I am not going to give you a specific answer now because I do not know his position at the moment; but if he is not the first in order the position will be this: that the man who is first in order for promotion will have to go there, whether he likes it or whether he does not, and get the promotion.

119. Now, you have said that the Stationmasters at combined stations perform the simplest class of postal work?—Generally speaking, yes.

120. If that is so, how do you account for the fact that when those very simple duties are taken over by the Post Office the Postmaster receives a higher salary than the Stationmaster received for the combined duties?—I think you might answer that yourself, Mr. Ramsay. That is a question which the Secretary of the Post Office would have to discuss.

121. I want your answer. You are a man of considerable railway experience, and also had a combined station yourself?—Yes. The unfortunate part of it, however, is that my experience has not caused me to take the same mighty exalted view of the hardships that our men now say they undergo in the work they undertake. My experience has been that the postal work, registration work, and work that is done by the Railway people for other Departments is of absolutely the simplest character.

122. Then, that being so, can you give any reason why Stationmasters should not receive as high a rate of pay as the Postmasters?—Yes, I can give you this reason: that the Stationmaster is receiving as much as the position is worth, and what the Postal Department pays I am not concerned with.

123. Does it follow from that, then, that the Postmaster is being too highly rewarded?—As you have put it in that way I will give you my opinion. The Postal Department is too highly paid, and if anything is done it should be put on the Railway level. You have asked for that, and you have got it.

124. Are there not, Mr. McVilly, a number of Railway officers who would be competent to take charge of a post-office such as Palmerston North?—I should say not. We may have some, but they would all want to be trained.

125. So that you may have in the Railway Department some officers who are competent to take charge of a post-office such as Palmerston North?—I have no doubt we have, but they would require some training.

126. Then I may mention some officers: W. Bowles, J. Bevan, A. K. Harris, R. Hislop, P. A. Duncan, H. C. Smith, J. McDonald, A. H. Millar, A. W. Morgan, H. Williams, P. E. Bean, I. Faris, T. Cooper, George Barclay. Now, do you consider that those men could take charge of the post-office at Palmerston North?—Yes, with training.

127. How much training?—I should say that those men to take charge of a postal district would require at least twelve months' training.

128. And then they would be competent?—They might—some of them would. There are some there that I would not put in charge.

129. Are there not some officers competent to take charge of post-offices such as Hawera?—With training, yes.

130. I will mention some names: H. J. Day?—He is an old Postal officer. He was getting £260 in 1881 when I was a junior in the Railway service.

131. E. Cameron, J. O. Duff, G. Andrews, J. R. Boswell, F. Grant, A. W. Hutchings, T. Foweraker, I. H. B. Jeffares, A. W. Kirton?—Well, I am not so sure that all those men would be competent to take charge of the Hawera Post-office.

* See Exhibit No. 3.